

RELIGION AND WARFARE: WHERE ARE WE GOING?
World parliament of Religions
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I. INTRODUCTION:

1. I thank Prof. Howard Sulk in and Mr .James Kenny for inviting me to share with you my humble wisdom as to how to promote harmony in the world in the 21st century. I also thank all of you for coming.
2. In the last decade, I have given lectures entitled "RELIGION AND PEACE" in many academic and non-academic institutions. About two years ago I gave a thirtieth anniversary lecture with the same title at Kent State University. In 1968, a bloody shoot-out occurred there when students tried to demonstrate peacefully against a war and four students were killed. It was a moving experience for me to give a talk on that particular campus about making peace in a world that loves war .
3. My original intention was to also give a talk entitled RELIGION AND PEACE at the Parliament. However, I decided to change my title to "RELIGION & WARFARE". Why? I have become more convinced that it is more important for religious leaders --and you are religious leaders-- to hear more about what damage religion does to world peace than all the good we are used to hear about. Whether we like it or not religion has contributed immensely to hate intolerance, and warfare. Unless we recognize this, our weaknesses and faults, and unless we as individuals make serious efforts to change ourselves personally, we cannot contribute to world peace. All the talks we give about peace and love, all the interfaith services we hold, all the peace conferences we attend would only reveal us to be hypocritical. Hypocrisy would only produce negative results for world peace.

II THE PROBLEM: THE ROLE OF RELIGION: PROS & CONS

1. Most religions teach love and peace. The Bible depicts the created world as good and expresses the hope of the messianic era. In Akan religion one prays to loving nurturing Asase Yaa: Mother Earth. The eastern religions also teach peace although they focus on peace within us, which is also very important. Many poets sing the beauty of world in which there is harmony: "The Sun does arise, And make happy the skies; the merry bells ring To welcome the spring; The skylark and the thrush, The birds of the bush, sing louder around To the bells' cheerful sound..." or "And all must love the human form be it in heathen, Turk, or Jew; Where mercy, love & pity dwell There God is dwelling too." (William Blake: Songs of innocence).

The persistent craving for peace is best expressed nowhere else I know as in the words of the great Hebrew prophet Isaiah: The wolf shall reside with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatting together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the hyena shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountains. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Is. 11: 6-9). He also says: ...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Is, 2:4)

III. THE HISTORICAL PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

So why "Religion and Warfare?" The prophetic desire is beautiful, but our hope is dashed and becomes illusive by the frightening reality of religious teachings and history. Religion has been a cause of warfare, even to the extent of glorifying it. Not a single religion I know has been free from war. The gods we meet in the Iliad or the Aeneid, and other early Greek writings glorify war and sanctify the battlefields. Aristotle, like his teacher Plato glorified war, and taught that it is natural, meaning ordered by the gods. The children of

Israel fought a war to exterminate the Amalekites. The Mahabharata is a battle epic poem. The Bhagavad Gita defends war, albeit in a metaphysical fashion. The god (Krishna) orders Arjuna "Bodies are said to die, but that which possesses the body is > eternal. Therefore you must fight. Die and you will win heaven. Conquer and you will enjoy earth. Stand up now, son of Kunti, and resolve to fight." Buddhism has not much to say about the evils of war. The Crusaders were told "Deo volunta. God wills it go kill them." The battle of the Lota, the cruelties of the Inquisition, the 30 Years War, and many such tragedies throw terrible light upon Christendom. Islam has its jihad or holy wars. The French legal philosopher, Jean Bodin (16th) saw religion as useful maintaining stability in a state, but that it becomes the cause of friction when there are factions, which he considered dangerous and pernicious and recommended the use of force to promote the accepted religion.

In ancient times, the tragic dramatist Euripides disillusioned by the war of the human savagery and violence. Lost belief in the moral order. There are no gods, if there are they are helpless.

How are ye blind,
Ye treaders down of cities, ye that cast Temples to desolation, and lay waste
Tomb, the untrodden sanctuaries where lie
The ancient dead; yourselves so soon to die (The Trojan War)

Hobbes (17th) saw religion as a primary drive but based upon irrational fear and illusion whereby people believe in some human being "whom they believe not only to be a wise man, and to labor to procure their happiness, but also to be a holy man to whom God vouchsafes to declare his will supernaturally." and that reformation so far from doing good, could only cause civil war, anarchy, and general misery." In his philosophy of propaganda, Machiavelli saw important use for religion: people are usually stupid and irrational and religion can serve political purposes."

In short, as a friend put it brutally, "Religion is the enemy of peace. Religion is the enemy of peace and love; it creates extremism. It offers such excuses as the gods ordered me and I must obey, or it is in my karma and I cannot change, "it is not my karma to help people", "my karma not to be concerned."

A. WAR IS TO SICKNESS AS PEACE IS TO HEALTH:

Let us look at how religion can be a force to reduce warfare, even if warring cannot be eliminated. First, let us consider the messages about peace that are practically universal in religion. Peace itself is a religious idea. (Very important concept) The primary meaning in Hebrew of shalom/salam is wholeness, prosperity, and health (Jr 39:7; Jb 15:21; Ps 122:6; Is 48:18; Mishnah Abot 3:2.) The word salam exists in Ethiopic, but the equivalent word 'dhnnt primarily health or well-being.

The word is used today in greetings in many Semitic languages, including, Hebrew, Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, and others. That this use goes back to ancient times is attested in several Biblical greetings (Jg 19: 20; IIs 18:28; I Chr 12:19; Dn 10:19.) Jacob to Laban(Gn 29:6; Joseph to his father Gn 43:7.) The salutation of peace is also mentioned in early Rabbinic literature (Ber 17a.)

War, like sickness, is the absence of health (Ecl 3:8.) Hence the use of shalom/salam to designate peace. Peace is not only the opposite of sickness and war it is also the opposite of mental disorder and agitation (Is32: 17; 48:22) Peace, along with truth and justice, is one of the most highly valued virtues of the Bible; it is a divine gift (Zk 8:19; Is 45: 7; Gn15:15; Ps 29:11.)

Peace is central to good, healthy and happy life. The great prophets, therefore, envisioned the Messianic era as a period of such life. Hence, the most important characteristics of the

Messianic era are the ascendancy of peace. The Messiah himself is known as the Sar Shalom or Prince of Peace (Is 9:6; Zc 9: 10.) There will be universal peace extending even to the animal world and war will no longer . be known (Is 2:2-4; 11 :6-9; Mc 4:4)

In later Jewish literature, in the Apocryphal and Rabbinic literature, peace is equally exalted as a divine gift and blessing (Ecclus 28:13; 50:23.) In Ecclesiasticus family peace, peace between husband and wife and brothers and sisters is listed as among the most beautiful things in the world, and some Rabbis taught that the merit of making peace in the family is equivalent to making peace in Israel (Aboth RN 28:43a).

The Rabbis of the Talmud repeatedly emphasize the centrality of peace. In Biblical Priestly Blessing (which has also come to be important in Christian worship) peace concludes it because of its importance (Sifte N 6:26.) Hillel taught, "Love peace and pursue peace" (Aboth 1: 12.) Others taught that the world is built on three foundations; Peace, truth, and justice (Aboth 1:18.) However, they considered peace at times as the most important. According to one view, the whole Torah exists for the sake of peace (Git 59b) and even God's name is peace (Shabbat IOb; Perek HaShalom.) Others considered peace so important that they claimed that truth could be sacrificed for the sake of peace (Yeb 65b.) Moreover, peace is so important that God would accept that the Israelites lived in peace and worshipped idolatry: He would not punish them in anger because there is peace among them (Ber R 8:6).

In Islam, as in Judaism, the term salam designates peace, health, and salutation. Although the word Islam means "submission", the expression salam came to be very important in Islam from very early times. The word appears in the Qur'an numerous times (Sura 97:5; 50:34; 15:46; 21: 69.) As in Judaism salam is also an important component of the world to come. Paradise is called Dar al-salam, "the dwelling of the bliss" (10:25; 6:127.) Salam is not only the formula of greeting in this world but also used by angels and in Paradise (36:58; 10:10; 33:44; 16:32; 39:73; 25:75. According to some commentators, Salam is the name of God.

Although the use of salam and salam alaikum or wa- alaikum al-salam as a greeting formula as in is thought by some to be Islamic, as shown above it is a well-established in Biblical times. The formula is found not only in Arabic but also in Aramaic, Ethiopic, and found in inscriptions in Nabataean, Safaitic of Pre- Islamic Northern Arabia.

As in Christianity and Judaism the Islam salat or prayer ritual also contains the salutation of peace (as in tashahhud) over the Prophet, the worshippers and the believers.

B. PEACE AND JUSTICE:

The question may be asked whether there can be peace without justice. Indeed, in . ancient times justice was associated with religion. Like wise, it too was deeply

rooted in religious thought. The knowledge of religious laws and obligations used by the ancients has had a significant impact on aspects of modern law.

From the very beginning of history, a central concern of all peoples has been justice: the administration of equity by those who understood the law and the protection of the individual and society from unfair treatment by rulers who came to have executive powers. The latter gave rise to kingship, the former to judges and prophets. The two offices, kingship and judgeship. Originally intertwined and inseparable, not only preceded all aspects of governance directly and indirectly but gave birth to nations and states.

The ancient concept that wrongful acts were thought to be caused not only by ordinary individuals but also by rulers led to belief in ultimate justice by God, the supreme judge. The Biblical huqqim wamishpatim and torah and miswot. , the laws and commandments,

underline that justice cannot be accomplished apart from spiritual authority or that it is separate from and above human governance.

A central aspect of law and jurisprudence in the Ancient Near East involved judges and prophets whose authority in certain Biblical periods superseded those of kings and governors. They played a key role in law and all aspects of jurisprudence and the ordering of society. For centuries, it was they who controlled the formulating, interpreting and applying the law. This is implied in the Book of Judges and the Book of Samuel.

We learn from the Bible about the separation of powers in ancient Israel. The separate legal and social status of prophets in the Ancient Near East depended on their spiritual and moral distinction. Hence, they held personal accountability only to the Supreme Divine Judge to maintain justice and to develop the law or to achieve their ends. In this respect, prophets (for instance, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and others) had special separate standing in formulating devices to punish kings and those in authority when they did wrong. Protection against the wrong doing of those in power is an important concern of ancient Biblical law and the prophets played a major role in it.

The role of prophets in ancient Biblical times, however, extended beyond the above. (More explanations). From court to prison they played as advocates of the wronged. Their role in defense of the poor and the ordinary citizen is very well known. As we learn from the Book of Judges, in earlier days of the nation of Israel, the prophets were judges who also prepared the army to defend the nation, an extension of their divine authority to protect Israel against its enemies. Moreover, guarding the safety of the national against those who wished it harm was regarded as a prototype of justice. It was an extension of their role in the spiritual and legal search to find justice for all wrongdoing apart from governance.

IV .The CENTURY OF WAR:

Religion continues to be a major cause of war down to our very time. The twentieth century is a great century. We have made great progress in eliminating certain diseases; expanded education; and improved life on earth. We have expanded the scientific boundaries and we are in touch with the distant space around us.

Yet it can also be said that the 20th century is the most criminal and murderous century in history. It is the most destructive of our environment. The two world wars; Hitler in Europe, Mussolini in Ethiopia, Stalin in Russia, Pol Pot in Asia, Idi Amin in Uganda. It is a century whose roads are paved with human blood. According to one report there are now at the end of the century about 300 inter- ethnic conflicts in the world based on ethnic and/or religious teachings of intolerance. From New York to Los Angeles, from Bosnia to South Africa, from Cashmere to Somalia. Sensational tabloids on racism and anti-Semitism are being freely peddled from Tokyo to Moscow. Religious leaders are either being accused as being a party to many of these conflicts or at best uninterested observers.

These conflicts are not limited to one continent or region of the world. From Belgium to South Africa, from the USA to the former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Chechnia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, the Middle East, religio-inter-ethnic conflicts and war have become rampant. A simple perusing of world-wide international dailies reveal such shocking headlines as: "Slaughter In Yugoslavia", "Skinheads stab 17 -year old Jewish girl, granddaughter of Auschwitz survivors, in Budapest", "German police confiscate neo-Nazi records", "Cincinnati Reds Owner, Marge Schott, accused of anti-Semitic and racist views", "Somalia clan war lords refuse relief delivery", "Tragedy looming in Sudan", "Bosnian women raped and murdered". We read about demonstrations at which religious or ethnic leaders are allegedly said to incite people to ethnic uprisings. An article from India Monitor reads: "... militants in Jammu and Kashmir [where there is severe Hindu-Moslem conflict]...said on Saturday they have declared war on TV serial they would strike government installations in the state if the next broadcast was not stopped" (Feb. 14, 1993). IN Gujarat, Kashmir, Punjab religions are promoting conflict not peace. Terror at

World Trade Center; Bombing in London, Florence, Tel Aviv, South Africa; "Children shoot children", There is no end to such reports from every corner of the globe. Many of them have something to do with religious or spiritual demise.

RELIGION SUI GENERIS IS NOT THE PROBLEM:

Many thinkers who are sympathetic to religion mistakenly believe that values promoted by religion have declined in this century. That is because religion has both a deep structure and a superficial structure, but these thinkers are generally fixated on the superficial structure. The superficial structure of religion contains

prescriptions and prohibitions that reflect the power structure of the parent society; many of these rules have been exposed as mere convention, often destructive of human potential, and now stand repudiated or forgotten--but it is because religion's deep structure, which remains substantially the same across all religions and through all time, has been put into practice in the civil rights movement that this has happened. The deep structure of religion encourages truth seeking, and resistance against the oppressions of political regimes and ideologies. Paradoxically, the modern adherence to science as a guide for public policy and private belief and behavior is a consequence of truth seeking. Thus many individuals who are deeply affected by their religion's mandate to seek truth have been able to retain the deep structures of their religion, while attempting to fix those superficial structures that have historically been repressive or untrue in a scientific sense.

As Whitehead thought, "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond reach; something which is the ultimate idea, and yet hopeless quest. Contrary, religious or ethnic consciousness can be positive and constructive.

Religions also evolve, and even have a lifespan. At the present time, many of the old religions are transforming, and some new religions, many of them partly revivals of lost earlier religions, are springing up. Religiosity is peaking, but in ways repugnant or threatening to those partisans of superannuated superficial structures. Atheism itself is a religious position; even one at the core of several developed ancient religions, for example, Jainism in India, and is to be sharply distinguished from nihilism or radical existentialism. The new religious forms all tend to be intensely moral, but their ground is in deep structure, and is always consonant with scientific discoveries about reality.

THE REAL PROBLEM: THE INDIVIDUAL

Diversity enriches the world; it is colorful and fascinating. Diversity provides learning opportunities; learning languages other than your own or understanding beliefs and rituals of other peoples can enlarge one's worldview and illuminate the mind. There is nothing wrong with religious pride, and indeed respecting and cherishing your own group can generate positive motivation. Without such pride many small groups (Jews, Armenians etc.) and even bigger nations would have disappeared, and for that our world would have been culturally poorer.

On the other hand, religious consciousness can be negative and destructive. Superiority beliefs about one's religion or ethnic group generate intolerance, fanaticism, and senseless hostility. Oppressing others for those reasons have had

tragic historical consequences throughout the world. Nazism and Fascism, Anti-Semitism and racism are examples of the negative aspect of morbid religious and ethnic intolerance.

The solution to the negative aspect of religious identity is not creating total uniformity. If

ethnic or religious uniformity were solutions to world conflicts, there would not be conflicts between Iraq and Kuwait and in Somali; on the other hand, there should not be peace in Switzerland and among the Jews who inhabit Israel.

The solution is not creating a bland world by erasing ethnic or religious diversity. We cannot stop hate; it has always existed. We survive it and we can do something about it. However, we should try to do something to stop intolerance or hate from infecting ethnicity or religiosity, and now is the time to do something about it as we approach the twenty first century .

The late professor of ethics at Union Theological Seminary Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote a book entitled, "Moral Man and Immoral Society". Can one perhaps also write a book entitled "Moral Society and the Immoral Individual"?

The first and principal source of destructive wars is not basically religion (or society/ group) *eo ipso*. I think we have to look for it in the behavior and actions of certain individuals. History seems to point that conflicts arise from an individual's mind, selfish goal, beliefs, self-interest, personal glory, feeling of superiority, greed or love of money, and of course personal sense of a divine mission or karma. One individual? Nero, Rasputin, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Idi Amin, Mengistu, Ben Laden et al.-can be like a single match that would ignite the fire in which the whole society becomes conflagrated.

Freud has rightly argued that war, a social phenomenon, and aggression, a personal phenomenon are different manifestations of the same drive. In warfare, the individual is the match, the battle is the fire. Without the match there can be no fire.

This brings me to an interesting story. In 1932, the League of Nations Institute of Intellectual Cooperation asked Professor Einstein to choose a subject he considered of central public interest and invite a person of his choice to dialogue it with. Einstein chose the subject, "Is there a way of delivering mankind from the Menace of War" and invited Freud for the dialogue. Two of the great thinkers of our time, both pacifists, thus left us a record of their view about war. Einstein wondered, "why it is so easy to infect people with the fever of war" and why some believe in the concept of "might makes right". He felt that man had an active instinct for hatred and destruction. Einstein whom Freud described as "a lover of fellow man" sought sincerely to find a way to stop warfare.

Freud struggled with the questions raised by Einstein, giving some explanations, in part, and some general suggestions, in part. He basically agreed with Einstein on the existence of an instinct of hate in humans and the belief in "might make right. He, however, preferred to call might "violence". Unfortunately, Freud pointed out that in early human history, individuals settled conflicts of interest by recourse to violence. They used brute force and in due time also utilized brainpower. The stronger person won and either killed or subjugated the weaker one. Eventually, weaker people learnt to band together in a legal manner to conquer the strong man. So to say *l'union fait la force* was thus born. That evolved into the exercise of force within and among groups. Ironically peace was achieved when larger states were formed and established laws to prevent violence such as *pax Romana*. However, this situation only resulted in greater destruction and did not ultimately solve the problem of war.

Freud then turned to explain his theory of the two instincts in humans: the erotic (basically positive and creative and loving as in religion) and the aggressive (basically negative and destructive and hating.) He recognized, however, that even the erotic itself is problematic because the selfishness in it becomes mixed with the aggressive instinct from which it cannot be isolated. Indeed, "the ideal motive has often served as a camouflage for the lust of destruction." In his analysis, he concluded with the pessimistic tone "there is no likelihood of our being able to suppress humanity's aggressive tendencies. " However, in his answer to Einstein he concluded saying that regardless we must try to divert and channel man's aggressive tendencies. We must try to promote love, the cultural

development of humanity (although he saw in civilization itself destructiveness), and conversion of people to the hatred of war, to be pacifists like him and Freud- and me too!

Freud was on the right way. He however missed an opportunity to focus upon the origin of the problem. The problem is in the instinct, but the instinct is in the individual. Where we fail is to recognize that each and every one of us is a potential source of conflict and we do little about it. Instead we use religion as an excuse for our failure. Until the individual see religion not as an excuse for hurting people but as a power for reforming the individual-if that it possible there is no hope for humanity .